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DEVELOPMENT OF A PAWNEE MYTH.

AMONG the Pawnees two or three stories are current which tell how in ancient times men who had strong dream power, or had been especially helped by the *Nahúrac*—the animals—or by *Atíus*, called the buffalo to the camp in a time of starvation, and so gave life to the tribe when it was about to perish with hunger. One of these tales belongs to the *Kit-ka-háh-ki* tribe, and the Skidi have a similar story of something which happened to them many years ago. I give this *Kit-ka-háh-ki* tale as I have told it in my “Pawnee Hero Stories,” and will endeavor to trace this myth to its origin, to show how the story came to be told and believed :—

TI-KĒ-WÁ-KŪSH.

THE MAN WHO CALLED THE BUFFALO.

This happened in the olden time before we had met the white people. Then the different bands lived in separate villages. The lodges were made of dirt. The *Kit-ka-hahk'*i band went off on a winter hunt, roaming over the country, as they used to do, after buffalo. At this time they did not find the buffalo near. They scouted in all directions, but could discover no signs of them. It was a hard time of starvation. The children cried and the women cried ; they had nothing at all to eat.

There was a person who looked at the children crying for something to eat, and it touched his heart. They were very poor, and he felt sorry for them. He said to the head chief: “Tell the chiefs and other head men to do what I tell them. My heart is sick on account of the suffering of the people. It may be that I can help them. Let a new lodge be set up outside the village for us to meet in. I will see if I can do anything to relieve the tribe.” The chief said that it was well to do this, and he gave orders for it.

While they were preparing to build this lodge they would miss this man in the night. He would disappear like a wind, and go off a long way, and just as daylight came he would be there again. Sometimes, while sitting in his own lodge during the day, he would reach behind him, and bring out a small piece of buffalo meat, fat and lean, and would give it to some one, saying, “When you have had enough, save what is left, and give it to some one else.” When he would give this small piece of meat to any one, the person would think, “This is not enough to satisfy my hunger ;” but after eating until he was full, there was always enough left to give to some other person.

In those days it was the custom for the head chief of the tribe, once in a while, to mount his horse, and ride about through the village, talking to the people, and giving them good advice, and telling them that they ought to do what was right by each other. At this time the chief spoke to the people, and explained that this man was going to try to benefit the tribe.

So the people made him many fine presents, otter skins and eagle feathers, and when they gave him these things each one said: "I give you this. It is for yourself. Try to help us." He thanked them for these presents, and when they were all gathered together he said: "Now you chiefs and head men of the tribe, and you people, you have done well to give me these things. I shall give them to that person who gives me that power, and who has taken pity on me. I shall let you starve yet four days. Then help will come."

During these four days, every day and night he disappeared, but would come back the same night. He would say to the people that he had been far off, where it would take a person three or four days to go, but he was always back the same night. When he got back on the fourth night, he told the people that the buffalo were near, that the next morning they would be but a little way off. He went up on the hill near the camp, and sacrificed some eagle feathers, and some blue beads, and some Indian tobacco, and then returned to the camp. Then he said to the people, "When that object comes to that place of sacrifice, do not interfere with it; do not turn it back. Let it go by. Just watch and see."

The next morning at daylight, all the people came out of their lodges to watch this hill, and the place where he had sacrificed. While they were looking, they saw a great buffalo bull come up over the hill to the place. He stood there for a short time and looked about, and then he walked on down the hill, and went galloping off past the village. Then this man spoke to the people and said, "There. That is what I meant. That is the leader of the buffalo; where he went the whole herd will follow."

He sent his servant to the chiefs to tell them to choose four boys, and let them go to the top of the hill where the bull had come over, and to look beyond it. The boys were sent, and ran to the top of the hill, and when they looked over beyond it they stopped, and then turned and came back running. They went to the chiefs' lodge and said to the chiefs, sitting there, "Beyond that place of sacrifice there is coming a whole herd of buffalo; many, many, crowding and pushing each other."

Then, as it used to be in the old times, as soon as the young men had told the chief that the buffalo were coming, the chief rode about the village, and told every one to get ready to chase them. He said to them besides: "Do not leave anything on the killing ground. Bring into the camp not only the meat and hides, but the heads and legs and all parts. Bring the best portions in first, and take them over to the new lodge, so that we may have a feast there." For so the man had directed.

Presently the buffalo came over the hill, and the people were ready, and they made a surround, and killed all that they could, and brought them home. Each man brought in his ribs and his young buffalo, and left them there at that lodge. The other parts they brought into the village, as he had directed. After they had brought in this meat, they went to the lodge, and stayed there four days and four nights, and had a great feast, roasting these ribs. The man told them that they would make four surrounds like this, and to get all the meat that they could. "But," he said, "in surrounding these buffalo you must see that all the meat is saved. *Ti-ral'-wa* does

not like the people to waste the buffalo, and for that reason I advise you to make good use of all you kill." During the four nights they feasted, this man used to disappear each night.

On the night of the fourth day he said to the people : "To-morrow the buffalo will come again, and you will make another surround. Be careful not to kill a yellow calf — a little one — that you will see with the herd, nor its mother." This was in winter, and yet the calf was the same color as a young calf born in the spring. They made the surround, and let the yellow calf and its mother go.

A good many men in the tribe saw that this man was great, and that he had done great things for the tribe, and they made him many presents, the best horses that they had. He thanked them, but he did not want to accept the presents. The tribe believed that he had done this wonderful thing, — had brought them buffalo, — and all the people wanted to do just what he told them to.

In the first two surrounds they killed many buffalo, and made much dried meat. All their sacks were full, and the dried meat was piled up out of doors. After the second surround, they feasted as before.

After four days, as they were going out to surround the buffalo the third time, the wind changed, and, before the people got near them, the buffalo smelled them and stampeded. While they were galloping away, the man ran up on to the top of the hill, to the place of sacrifice, carrying a pole, on which was tied the skin of a kit fox; and when he saw the buffalo running, and that the people could not catch them, he waved his pole, and called out *Ska-a-a-a!* and the buffalo turned right about, and charged back right through the people, and they killed many of them. He wished to show the people that he had the power over the buffalo.

After the third surround they had a great deal of meat, and he called the chiefs together and said, "Now, my chiefs, are you satisfied?" They said, "Yes, we are satisfied, and we are thankful to you for taking pity on us and helping us. It is through your power that the tribe has been saved from starving to death." He said : "You are to make one more surround, and that will be the end. I want you to get all you can. Kill as many as possible, for this will be the last of the buffalo this winter. Those presents that you have made to me, and that I did not wish to take, I give them back to you." Some of the people would not take back the presents, but insisted that he should keep them, and at last he said he would do so.

The fourth surround was made, and the people killed many buffalo and saved the meat. The night after this last surround he disappeared and drove the buffalo back. The next morning he told the people to look about, and tell him if they saw anything. They did so, but they could not see any buffalo.

The next day they moved camp, and went east toward their home. They had so much dried meat that they could not take it all at once, but had to come back and make two trips for it. When they moved below, going east, they saw no fresh meat, only dried meat ; but sometimes, when this man would come in from his journeys, he would bring a piece of meat, — a little piece, — and he would divide it up among the people, and they would put it

into the kettles and boil it, and everybody would eat, but they could not eat it all up. There would always be some left over. This man was so wonderful that he could change even the buffalo chips that you see on the prairie into meat. He would cover them up with his robe, and when he would take it off again, you would see there pounded buffalo meat and tallow (pemmican), *tüp-o-har'üs*.

The man was not married; he was a young man, and by this time the people thought that he was one of the greatest men in the tribe, and they wanted him to marry. They went to one of the chiefs, and told him that they wanted him to be this man's father-in-law, for they wanted him to raise children, thinking that they might do something to benefit the tribe. They did not want that race to die out. The old people say that it would have been good if he had had children, but he had none. If he had, perhaps they would have had the same power as their father.

That person called the buffalo twice, and twice saved the tribe from a famine. The second time the suffering was great, and they held a council to ask him to help the tribe. They filled up the pipe, and held it out to him, asking him to take pity on the tribe. He took the pipe, and lighted it and smoked. He did it in the same way as the first time, and they made four surrounds, and got much meat.

When this man died, all the people mourned for him a long time. The chief would ride around the village and call out: "Now I am poor in mind on account of the death of this man, because he took pity on us and saved the tribe. Now he is gone and there is no one left like him."

This is a true and sacred story that belongs to the Kit-ka-hahk'-i band. It happened once long ago, and has been handed down from father to son in this band. The Skidi had a man who once called the buffalo, causing them to return when stampeded, as was done in this story.

NOTE.—Big Knife, a Skidi, who died only recently, said that the man was alive in his time. *Kuru'ks-u le-sharu* (Bear Chief), a Skidi, says that he knew the man. His name was Carrying Mother.

So far as can be gathered from this narrative, the calling of the buffalo is the direct result of the supernatural powers of the hero, but I shall endeavor to show that the main event here related—the calling of the buffalo—was at one time a commonplace occurrence among the Pawnees; that by the introduction of new elements into the life of the tribe this custom became obsolete; and that all the circumstances connected with it, except the one central fact that men once brought buffalo within the reach of the people, long ago passed from the memory of the tribe.

A study of some of the recent customs of more primitive plain tribes will, I hope, make this clear.

Far to the north of the home of the Pawnees live a people who have had much less intercourse than they with the whites, who have not had horses nearly so long, and who up to within ten or twelve

years had to a great extent preserved their primitive habits. These are the Blackfeet.

Up to the time when they obtained horses, the only way in which the Blackfeet secured buffalo was by means of *piskuns*. These were inclosures, built usually at the foot of a precipice, the cut bank forming one of the walls, and the fence on the other side being made of logs, rocks, brush, and so on, built up to a height of six or eight feet. From a point on the edge of the precipice above this inclosure two diverging lines of stone heaps, or of clumps of brush, ran out for a long distance on to the prairie, so that their farther ends were widely separated, forming a \triangleright -shaped chute. When meat was needed, the people went up on to the prairie, and concealed themselves behind the stone heaps or the brush, and a man especially selected for the purpose was sent out toward the feeding herd of buffalo to bring them within the arms of the \triangleright . This man, who had prepared himself for the task by praying and fasting, advanced pretty close to the buffalo, and then, by calling and by alternately showing himself and disappearing, attracted their attention. Sometimes the man wore a robe and a bull's head, at others he was naked, without any disguise. At first a few of the buffalo would raise their heads and look at him, but it was not long before all had stopped feeding and were staring at him. After a little, they would begin to walk toward him, and as they approached, he would move away. If they began to trot, he would increase his speed so as to equal theirs. They followed, and in this way he induced them to come after him within the arms of the \triangleright . After they had passed within the arms of the chute, the Indians behind the outer rock piles would spring into sight, and shout and wave their robes. This frightened the buffalo, who now ran away from the enemy in the rear, and the man who was leading them soon slipped out of sight, and either hid himself, or climbed down the precipice toward which the buffalo were running. As a rule, the wings of the chute kept the buffalo travelling in the desired direction, that is, toward the angle of the \triangleright , where they would reach the precipice, and fall over it into the corral below. But sometimes in winter, when snow was on the ground, a method was adopted to make this doubly sure. A line of buffalo chips, each one supported on three small sticks, so that it stood a few inches above the snow, was carried from the angle of the \triangleright straight toward the prairie. The chips were about thirty feet apart, and ran midway between the wings of the chute. This line was of course conspicuous against the white snow, and when the buffalo were running down the chute they always followed it, never turning to the right nor to the left. No doubt they thought it a trail which other buffalo had followed.

In the latter days of the *piskun*, the man who led the buffalo was often mounted on a white horse. He rode near the herd, and then began to zigzag from side to side in front of it. As he approached, the buffalo began to raise their heads and look at him. Pretty soon they walked toward him, and then began to go a little faster, until at last they were running, the rider, of course, always retreating from them. When he had led them into the chute, the people rose up from behind the rock piles and drove them on. The Blackfeet also practised the surround, by which the buffalo were led into a circle of people or lodges, as described in my "Pawnee Hero-Stories." *Piskuns* were in use among the Blackfeet within thirty years, and very likely to within a more recent time.

It may be assumed that the motive which led the buffalo to follow this moving and (to them) remarkable object was curiosity. They saw something they did not recognize, and approached it for the purpose of identifying it. Other animals are known to act in a like manner under similar circumstances. The old practice of alluring the prong-horned antelope within shot by showing a red flag, or even a white handkerchief on the end of a ramrod, is familiar to us all. I myself have had antelope, which ran away startled before they had seen me distinctly, come back from the distance of a mile, and trot up within forty or fifty yards, in the effort to make out just what I was. Of course this is more commonly done by young animals than by those older and more experienced. Elk, too, will often walk toward an object which they do not recognize as dangerous, in the endeavor to determine for themselves just what it is. In the same way, ducks used commonly to be "toled" within gunshot, on the shores of Chesapeake Bay, by a little dog trained to run up and down the beach; and within a few years I have been told by a well-known ornithologist that he has seen this practised with success.

I am satisfied that, before the Indians of the northern plains obtained horses, they all of them secured most of their buffalo by means of traps and surrounds, and that the leading of buffalo into the inclosure or into the ring of people was universally practised by them. Among the tribes who used to surround the buffalo, my own inquiries have given me the names of the following: Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Pawnees, Omahas, Otoes, Poncas, some bands of the Dakotas, Arikaras, Mandans, Snakes, Crees, Gros Ventres of the Village, Crows, Blackfeet, Sarcees, and Gros Ventres of the Prairie. In primitive times the only weapons which these people had to use against the buffalo were stone-headed arrows, and it must be apparent to any one who has given any attention to the subject that these would be ineffective against this animal.

Very likely the Pawnees never built *piskuns*, or anything exactly

corresponding to them, for their country was not adapted to this mode of capture, but there is no doubt that they did decoy the buffalo into a circle of people, just as we have positive testimony that the Blackfeet and the Rees used to do. No people are keener observers than Indians, and no people are better acquainted with the habits of animals, especially of those animals on which they depend for food. It is not to be supposed that any one of the plains tribes was ignorant of the fact that buffalo could thus be brought by an appeal to their curiosity.

Now it is to be remembered that horses came to the plains Indians from the south, and that as soon as they obtained horses, and learned to ride, the primitive methods of taking the buffalo began to be supplanted by the more effective, easy, and exciting one of running. As the buffalo in later times was always rushed at and put to flight, was known to have keen powers of scent and easily to take the alarm if the wind blew from the hunter toward the game, it would gradually come to be forgotten that it could readily be decoyed by an appeal to its curiosity ; but the fact would be remembered that in ancient days the buffalo used to be called up close to the people, and the only way to account for this would be to attribute to the man who called them powers which were supernatural. The tribes who had earliest obtained horses would be the first to abandon their primitive methods of taking the buffalo. Those who had longest given up their original customs would have most completely forgotten them ; but about the one remembered fact that the buffalo were called, there would gradually grow up many details, supplied by successive narrators, which would add to the interest of the story, and would tend to make the performances of the man who accomplished this wonderful act appear more and more marvellous.

The Pawnees have had horses for more than two hundred years, and, since they obtained them, have always chased the buffalo. That they used commonly to decoy the game to its death has long been forgotten, but that the buffalo came when they were called has not been forgotten ; and so around the memory of this single fact has grown up among the tribe the miraculous story of *Ti-kah-we-kush*, the man who called the buffalo.

If my conclusions are just, the memory of this old custom of decoying the buffalo should have passed away from the tribes of the south earlier than it did from those of the north, and such appears to have been the case.

Confirmation of this explanation of the myth may be found in a similar story related to me by the Arikaras. This tale has not had so much time in which to grow as has the Pawnee story, and the powers attributed to the hero are not nearly so noteworthy.

The Arikaras belong to the Pawnee family. They live farther north than the true Pawnees, have had less intercourse with the whites, and are more primitive in their ways than their more southern relatives. These people also tell of a man who called the buffalo. This man's name was Chief Bear. As is readily seen by the way in which the people now speak of them, his feats were less surprising than those of the Pawnee or Skidi hero, and he does not appear to have called the buffalo in response to any special needs of the tribe. It is not told that he did it under any great stress of circumstances, nor that the tribe was in danger of starvation, or was even in great want. The act seems to have been performed as an ordinary matter, and yet Chief Bear's powers are regarded as peculiar. He is singled out for special mention, and is compared by the Rees with the Pawnee hero who did the same thing.

The story told by the Rees is as follows: The Rees also had a man who called the buffalo. The people would go out on the prairie, and would hide themselves so as to form a big circle, open at one side. Then Chief Bear would go off over to where the buffalo were, and would bring them into the circle, and the people would close up the gap, so that the buffalo would be surrounded. They would run round and round within the circle, and the people would keep closing in on them, and would prevent them from breaking through the line by yelling and tossing their robes in the air, and finally the buffalo would get tired out and it was easy to kill them.

Finally, as has been said, when we get up north among the Blackfeet, the calling of the buffalo becomes an every-day matter, and was practised certainly as late as the year 1862 among the Pikúni tribe of the Blackfeet; while, among the *Sik-si-kau* tribe and the plains Crees, *pískuns* were used down to much later times.

A hundred years ago the Pawnees had probably forgotten that the buffalo were once commonly called up to the people, but among the Blackfeet there are still living many men who time and again have seen this done.

George Bird Grinnell.